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(Book Review)***



***50 Tips for Teacher Development. Jack C. Richards.  
Cambridge University Press (2017). viii +120 pp., ISBN:  
978-1-108-40836-3 (paperback).***

Karim Sadeghi <sup>a</sup>, Roghayeh Pourbahram <sup>a,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Urmia University, Iran*

The current pocket book published by Cambridge University Press is a handy book for language teachers around the world. In an interview with the author about the rationale behind the publication of this book ([https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=1xejkhG6H\\_g](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=1xejkhG6H_g)), Professor Jack C. Richards, an internationally recognized figure in the field of language teaching, states that far more people have over the years been involved in learning and teaching languages and that the profession has expanded with rising standards; and all this necessitates having quality teachers, with updated knowledge, to help achieve the goals of language institutions. Indeed, this highly-regarded ELT personality adds that the book is aimed at teachers and teacher trainers who want to reflect back on where they were in their teaching profession and where they need to go and suggestions are also made for program directors who are searching for activities to implement for professional development.

Unlike Penny Ur's (2106) *100 Teaching Tips for Teachers*, where one tip is introduced on one page, Richard's tips extend to two pages each. Richards' *50 Tips for Teacher Development* has been organized into 12 sections. Each tip is introduced at the top with the help of a purpose statement and is later elaborated with advice and examples, encouraging self-reflection through questions.

Section 1 includes 3 tips and requires teachers to review their professional development and changes during the past years and find their current stage in the profession. In a similar vein, the next section, tips 4 to 8, encourages teachers to think about their own teaching practice and examine it by listening to themselves, observing others, and keeping a portfolio and a journal. The section recommends reflection on one's own teaching practice by assembling tangible documents from teaching sessions. It seems that as a first step, Richards wants teachers to evaluate their own performance and find out where they currently stand in their profession.

Section 3 with its 3 tips (9-11) focuses on the specific nature of each lesson. Teachers are advised to review lesson plans, identify features of effective lessons and observe lessons by developing a

\* Corresponding author: Urmia University, English Department, Valfajr Street, Urmia, Iran  
Email address: [r.pourbahram@urmia.ac.ir](mailto:r.pourbahram@urmia.ac.ir)

lesson observation form (a sample of which appears as Appendix 3 in the book) for successful planning and management of lessons, looking for lesson qualities that can be observed. Section 4 with its 4 tips (12-15) concentrates on learners and emphasizes diversity of learners in classrooms and recommends that the teacher cater for learners' needs (e.g. in reading), and then examines teachers' classroom roles by offering various metaphors, and advises that teachers reflect and learn from critical incidents. Indeed, reflection on critical incidents in the classroom has been the focus of attention of many scholars in recent years (Farrell, 2015). It is assumed that by better understanding the students, their needs, and their personality traits, teachers can plan activities and materials more efficiently so that by addressing their needs more appropriately, teachers can provide better support for students' learning.

The next section of the book encompasses 3 tips (16-18) that are meant to raise teachers' awareness of the language they utilize in teaching. Teachers are recommended to observe the way they use questions and give feedback. Richards suggests that interaction in the classroom be transcribed to provide clues of the real use of language in the classroom.

'Critical Reflection', as the title of section 6 with 4 tips (19-22), proposes that teachers can learn from their own experiences and can experiment with different approaches. Taking part in group problem solving, trying to do things differently, and learning to engage in critical reflection are among the key suggestions of this section.

Tips 23-26 (section 7) put forward different ways to expand teachers' knowledge of the field, such as joining teachers' associations, attending conferences, learning from an expert, and forming or participating in a reading group to expand knowledge of the field. Indeed section 7 assumes that it is important to keep up-to-date with developments in the field. In a similar approach, developing research skills is encouraged in section 8. The tips (27-30) include reviewing textbooks, carrying out action research, conducting a replication study and taking part in a lesson-study. It is believed that teaching and researching are interwoven; and that through research, teachers can find solutions for the issues they encounter in their profession.

Tips 31-35, grouped under the title of 'Expand your Teaching Skills' in section 9, are meant to challenge teachers to step out of their comfort zones and try new ideas. Although some experienced teachers may find the ideas risky and uncomfortable, the offered tips can provide support for all teachers who want to be creative and try to do things differently.

Section 10 involves teachers in real research. The tips (36-40) highlight the value of observing one's own teaching and using narratives and long-term case studies to find new meanings in teaching. Tips 41-44 (section 11) are concerned with sharing knowledge. In order to achieve the best results, Richards finds value in creating a culture of teacher development, planning meetings and workshops, and starting a suggestion box. In other words, teachers can help develop themselves by mutual support and feedback from each other. The last section of the book also expands the ideas proposed in previous sections by asking teachers to get involved in team-teaching, online discussions, peer coaching, presenting, and writing journals. For Richards, successful teachers see themselves a community with common concerns and interests and endeavor to learn from each other's experiences and skills.

Whereas Ur's book (2016) concentrates on real language classroom teaching from a rather practical perspective as well as the tools that a teacher should keep ready in his/her teaching tool box, it seems that Richard's book goes a step forward beyond what transpires in the classroom. Richards suggests that teachers aim at self-developing in their profession by getting involved in deep reflections, attending conferences and workshops and joining other teachers in forums and groups to discuss and learn about the new realms of their field. In fact, Richards' book is mostly a

researcher teacher's view toward the field. His book, accordingly, offers brilliant tips for language teachers who are interested in professionally developing themselves and delving into the complex nature of teaching. In fact, according to Kunnan (Sadeghi, 2018), the point is to find a balance between teaching and research to enjoy one's academic life. It seems that Richard's book nicely makes this connection and can thus prove a very useful toolbox in assisting teachers to update their knowledge in the profession and guide them through the teaching journey by viewing teaching from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

## References

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